

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method for a customer to return one or more items previously supplied by a business establishment to said customer, comprising:

developing a list of items to be returned by

adding one or more items presented by said customer to said list of items to be returned,

checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

advising said customer of the likely return status of said listed items, said checking being performed by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy;

presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are authorized by said processing to be returnable and/or any of the items that are not authorized by said processing not to be returnable, said processing comprising checking

wherein said authorization is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes rules including a dynamic rule that a business value condition must be satisfied; and

presenting said definitive confirmation to said computing devices associated with the customer location.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said confirmation further comprises presenting notification to said computing devices associated with a customer location of any updates to said return policy, and wherein said computing devices then update said locally stored return policy.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said rules comprise at least one rule that a condition must be satisfied, and wherein said condition is either temporal or usage.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said business condition is at least one condition selected from the group consisting of: a current market condition, an inventory level, a current demand, a weather condition, a seasonal factor, and any combination thereof.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said developing step further comprises determining if said return policy requires that one of said items needs to be physically returned to said business establishment, and if not, presenting notice that said one item can be discarded.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said developing step further comprises determining if said business establishment will have one of said items picked up, and if so, scheduling a pick up of that item and if not, presenting a notice that said item must be transported to the business establishment.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of collecting data associated with said items, said data comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of: customer identification, product identification, store where purchased, date

of purchase, date of return, quantity purchased, quantity returned, reason for return, and whether or not to return was handled as an exception to the returns policy.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising a step of mining said data.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising making said data available for mining.

12-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A computing system for processing the return of one or more items by a customer previously supplied by a business establishment, the system comprising one or more networked computing devices each device operatively coupled to a memory with program code stored therein for:

developing a list of items to be returned

by checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

adding to said list only those items that are returnable according to said return policy;

presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are returnable and/or any of the items that are not returnable;

, wherein said identifying is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes a

dynamic rule that one or more conditions selected from the group consisting of a current market condition, an inventory level, a current demand, a weather condition, a seasonal factor must be satisfied.

16. (Original) The computing system of claim 15, wherein said computing devices further develop a notice to return an item that is determined not returnable according to said policy, and present said notice to said business establishment.

17. (Original) The computing system of claim 15, wherein said return policy includes a rule that a condition must be satisfied, and wherein said condition is either temporal or usage.

18. (Original) The computing system of claim 15, further comprising an input device, wherein each of said items to be returned is entered by said input device, and wherein said input device is selected from the group consisting of: keyboard, mouse, touch screen, stylus pad, radio frequency tag reader, bar code reader, microphone and any combination thereof.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 15, wherein said computing devices further determine if said return policy requires that one of said items needs to be physically returned to said business establishment, and if not, further notify a user that said one item can be discarded.

21. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 15, wherein said computing devices further determine if said business establishment will have one of said items picked up, and if so, further schedule a pick up of that item and if not, further present notice to a user that said item must be transported to the business establishment.

22. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 15, wherein said computing devices further collect data associated with said items, wherein said data comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of: customer identification, product identification, store where purchased, date of purchase, date of return, quantity purchased, quantity returned, reason for return, and whether or not to return was handled as an exception to the returns policy.

23-24. (Canceled)

25. (Original) The computing system of claim 15, further comprising an input device, wherein each of said items to be returned is entered by said input device, and wherein said input device is a radio frequency tag reader.

26. (Currently amended) A memory media for the control of a computer system that processes the return of one or more items by a customer previously supplied by a business establishment comprising, the memory media comprising instructions encoded thereon for:

developing a list of items to be returned by

checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

adding to said list only those items that are returnable according to said return policy;

presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are returnable and/or any of the items that are not returnable ;

, wherein said identifying is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes a

dynamic rule that one or more conditions selected from the group consisting of a current market condition, an inventory level, a current demand, a weather condition, a seasonal factor must be satisfied.

27. (Previously presented) The memory media of claim 26 further comprising instructions for developing a notice to return an item that is determined not returnable according to said policy, and for presenting presents said notice to said business establishment.

28. (Original) The memory media of claim 26, wherein said return policy includes a rule that a condition must be satisfied, and wherein said condition is either temporal or usage.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously presented) The memory media of claim 26 further comprising instructions for determining if said return policy requires that one of said items needs to be physically returned to said business establishment, and if not, for notifying a user that said one item can be discarded.

31. (Previously presented) The memory media of claim 26 further comprising instructions for determining if said business establishment will have one of said items picked up, and if so, for scheduling a pick up of that item and if not, for presenting notice to a user that that item must be transported to the business establishment.

32. (Previously presented) The memory media of claim 26, further comprising instructions for collecting data associated with said items, wherein said data comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of: customer identification, product identification, store where purchased, date of purchase, date of return, quantity purchased,

quantity returned, reason for return, and whether or not to return was handled as an exception to the returns policy.

33-34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method for a customer to one or more return of items previously supplied by a business establishment, comprising:

developing a list of items to be returned by

 checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

 adding to said list only those items that are returnable according to said return policy;

 presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

 identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are returnable and/or any of the items that are not returnable ;

, wherein said identifying is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes a dynamic rule that one or more conditions selected from the group consisting of a current market condition, an inventory level, a current demand, a weather condition, a seasonal factor must be satisfied.

36. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said confirmation includes notification of any updates to said return policy.

37. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said developing step further comprises developing a notice to return an item that is determined not returnable according to said policy, and presenting said notice to said business establishment.

38. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said developing step further comprises determining if said return policy requires that one of said items needs to be physically returned to said business establishment, and if not, presenting notice that said one item can be discarded.

39. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said developing step further comprises determining if said business establishment will have one of said items picked up, and if so, scheduling a pick up of that item and if not, presenting a notice that said item must be transported to the business establishment.

40. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said developing step employs an input device and said presenting and identifying steps employ one or more computing devices.

41. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40 wherein at least one of said computing devices is located remotely from said input device.

42. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40 wherein at least one of said computing devices is located locally to said input device.

43. (Currently amended) A computing system for processing the return of one or more items by a customer previously supplied by a business establishment to said customer, the

system comprising one or more networked computing devices, each device operatively coupled to a memory with program code stored therein for:

developing a list of items to be returned by

adding one or more items presented by said customer to said list of items to be returned,

checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

advising said customer of the likely return status of said listed items, said checking being performed by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy;

presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are authorized by said processing to be returnable and/or any of the items that are not authorized by said processing not to be returnable, said processing comprising checking

wherein said authorization is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes rules including a dynamic rule that a business value condition must be satisfied.

44. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 43 wherein said computing devices further develop a notice to return an item that is determined not returnable according to said policy, and present said notice to said business establishment.

45. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 43 wherein said return policy includes a rule that a condition must be satisfied, and wherein said condition is either temporal or usage.

46. (Previously presented) The method of claim 43 wherein said business condition is at least one condition selected from the group consisting of: a current market condition, an inventory level, a current demand, a weather condition, a seasonal factor, and any combination thereof.

47. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 43 wherein said computing devices further determine if said return policy requires that one of said items needs to be physically returned to said business establishment, and if not, notify a user that said one item can be discarded.

48. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 43 wherein said computing devices further determine if said business establishment will have one of said items picked up, and if so, schedule a pick up of that item and if not, present notice to a user that said item must be transported to the business establishment.

49. (Previously presented) The computing system of claim 43 further comprising an input device, wherein each of said items to be returned is entered by said input device, and wherein said input device is a radio frequency tag reader.

50. (Currently amended) A memory media for the control of a computer system that processes the return of items by a customer previously supplied by a business establishment comprising, the memory media comprising instructions encoded thereon for:

developing a list of items to be returned by

adding one or more items presented by said customer to said list of items to be returned,

checking each of said items to be returned with a return policy of said business establishment, said checking being performed upon each item's addition to said list by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy, and

advising said customer of the likely return status of said listed items, said checking being performed by computing devices associated with a customer location that locally store said return policy;

presenting said list of items for processing by said business establishment; and

identifying a definitive confirmation of said items on said list that are authorized by said processing to be returnable and/or any of the items that are not authorized by said processing not to be returnable, said processing comprising checking

wherein said authorization is performed by computing devices associated with said business establishment that store said return policy and wherein said return policy includes rules including a dynamic rule that a business value condition must be satisfied.

51. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein said locally-stored return policy for an item comprises a dynamic rule, and wherein said developing and checking further comprises said customer-associated computer devices requesting that said business-establishment-associated computing devices check said item with said dynamic rule.

52. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein said business value condition comprises thresholds for amount of business and the number of returns generated by a customer, and further comprising a step of granting a particular customer an exception to at least one return policy if said thresholds are satisfied.

53. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said developing and checking further comprises said customer-associated computer devices requesting that said business-establishment-associated computing devices check said item with said dynamic rule.

Appl. No.: 09/874,195
Amdt. filed January 26, 2004
Reply to Office action mailed October 26, 2004

54. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said dynamic rule further includes a business value condition comprises thresholds for amount of business and the number of returns generated by a customer, and further comprising a step of granting a particular customer an exception to at least one return policy if said thresholds are satisfied.